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**The connection among the interpretations and the assessment of  
educatedness and the characteristics of pupils**

**THESIS**

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### **The purpose of the paper**

We are of many kinds. We see the same concept along different lines; the other person is reflected in us in diverse ways on the basis of criteria aligned to our personal theories. Both the different ways of interpreting concepts and the exploration of deviations and diversities and the perception of pupils by teachers as well as the relationship that evolves on this basis (and its continuous and dynamic development) involve highly interesting issues.

The way “educatedness”<sup>1</sup> is put into linguistic terms is not common and its substance is little clarified, albeit it is used in general in most of the cases. The concept is used nevertheless, both in technical literature about pedagogy and in practice (if these two can be separated from one another at all), and it is used also as a common everyday concept by those who are not professional pedagogues.

The first major issue of the paper is the interpretation of the concept of educatedness as used by pedagogues. In connection with this, the main question is how it appears among pedagogues in the internal world of the school, in their own personal world and in their domain. Interpretations by theoretical pedagogy also become interesting from this aspect (so, the main line of bearing is not their in-depth and detailed analysis), namely, what pedagogues working in public education have built into their own theories. To what extent does this accord with the various conceptions and to what extent do systems and systemic components that deviate from it manifest themselves and in what form.

Beyond basic research into the concept of educatedness, there comes the next major issue: what other content and features may be connected to the characteristics of educatedness. What are the teachers' views and what are pupils like that are assessed in a specific way by teachers with regard to educatedness.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is designed to study the interpretations of the Hungarian concept of “neveltség”. At first sight, finding the English equivalent seems to be easy since several terms are used in parallel with, almost as equivalents to, other concepts in Hungarian technical literature (efficiency and efficacy of education, attainment of educational targets, etc.), whose substance is reviewed by English technical literature also. Due to its specific linguistic meaning, the term “neveltség” may cover different phenomena and specific interpretations and practice indicates that in actual fact there may be different educational ideas behind them. This paper expressly focuses on the interpretations of the concept. By consensus, we will use “educatedness” to translate it, while maintaining and emphasizing that the original term of “neveltség” may (also) carry different meanings.

### Conceptual framework

The 'Pedagógiai Lexikon' [Lexicon of Pedagogy] carries definitions about the level of educatedness and the efficiency and efficacy of education. They can be found in it as headings that are explained and expounded which might indicate that these are different concepts. However, in most of the cases, they are used in technical discourse in parallel and as synonyms.

In 1971, József Nagy provided the following definition for the characteristics of educatedness: development of intellectual and physical aptitude and development in terms of world view, morals and aesthetics. This is reflected in knowledge, motives, systems of beliefs, sets of habits, interpersonal relations and will (Nagy, 1971, pp. 50-52).

In connection with 'educatedness', the most widely used term is 'level of educatedness' already mentioned above. István Bábosik gave the following definition for the level of educatedness: "the development of the individual at a given point in time relative to the educational target" (Bábosik, 1997, 607.p.). Several indices are available to measure development. As he put it "it is reflected in the repertory of the individual's behaviours and activities in the first place, to what extent he or she is able to implement forms of behaviour and activities for self-development and the development of the community, and how frequently they appear, to what extent they prevail as a tendency, how solid they are and to what extent they are mixed with less constructive manifestations" (Bábosik, 1997, 607.p.).

According to Lénárd and Rapos, the interpretation of the level of educatedness can be specified structurally on three levels (in a school framework) (Lénárd, Rapos, 2004). They propose a tool termed SZITA for measuring the features of the pupils' educatedness and for differentiating the levels of educatedness. It is very important that they define their model as *\_an adequate\_* and not as *\_the only adequate\_* model which is essential because with this they also declare that it depends on the given institution and the given community what gets into the focus of examination.

The paper addresses the relationship among the different terms that may be linked to educatedness and the difficulties of providing a definition. It touches upon the concepts of educational targets, the efficacy and the efficiency of education and social competency and it attempts to expound on their connections and interrelationships.

To round off the theoretical introduction, the author attempts to put forward distinctions that may be acceptable as working hypotheses also. The values refer to categories set forth as a requirement, as a target, formulated in a normative manner in general. Competency contributes to being able to implement the objective specified as a value (or the value specified as an objective), to being able to attain it. These competencies “span values”, they are not value-specific, that may be the reason why different kinds of value assumptions may work and the same key competencies are thought to have primary importance. The objective may be the “implementation” of a value, the development of a competence or the “best” possible presentation of a feature of educatedness. The features of educatedness colour the way values are implemented, fulfilled or modulated, “made palpable and lifelike”.

### **Definition of the problem**

In most of the cases, educatedness is examined in a group situation and feedback or the evaluation of the results appears linked principally to entire classes of pupils or schools.

Yet, teachers often make statements about the educatedness of individual children. Before doing so, however, they do not review the questionnaires that focus on their education, which they complete anonymously anyway, or the individual answers that serve as a basis for the study. In general, teachers’ statements, judgements, assessments and estimates are based on the personal perceptions of the pupils; they cannot be said to be made on the basis of objective, impeccable, specific sampling. The perception of educatedness has a unique colour, based on the perception of the person and the ideas of the pedagogue held about educatedness (and probably lots of other factors). All this is done while the interpretation of the concept is often uncertain and less orderly and regulated data collection takes place in establishing and estimating the properties of educatedness. One can say that a “practice” has evolved that orients the teacher with shades of classification of impressions within the pedagogue’s own conceptual framework and system of criteria about his pupils’ characteristics.

It can be taken for an elementary question how education is interpreted by the teacher. To put it simply, from the direction of mediating culture, from an approach traditionally termed normative whereby the expectations and the values of society are regarded as important, or focusing on

unfolding the self, the freedom of the child and child-centeredness (Golnhofer, 2003). Naturally, it may strive to strike a balance between the two. These differences can also be traced in interpreting the concept of educatedness, whether we analyse the criteria applied or review the descriptions of the situations.

### **The empirical bases of the paper**

The peculiar status of adolescence can be perceived even more strongly with regard to this theme. The question arises how the issue of “educatedness” can be interpreted in a section of life so much imbued with internal work, identity crisis and self-definition, and what informative force its components and indices hold.

In May 2007, 251 six-grade pupils and their 76 teachers in six towns and villages in a small region of Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok county (in the central part of Hungary) answered the questions of our questionnaire (who stated their opinion in a total of 92 questionnaires).

The layout of the study battery is shown in the next figure.



The multifariousness of the study methods is justified by the complexity of the theme and naturally by the interest and preliminary hypotheses of the author.

And the problem requires to be approached from both a quantitative and qualitative side, using complementary methods during the study. Therefore, I strove to create an organic unity of the different methods while compiling the study package.

I carried out exploratory research in connection with the interpretation of educatedness; in other words, my objective was to get to know the pedagogues' interpretations and ideas in connection with this concept. Within this, I requested them to list the criteria of educatedness and asked them about the factors that influence it. This meant a general interpretation and a more abstract characterisation of the term in the teachers' questionnaire.

Then, the pedagogues had to think about the term in specific situations in connection with their pupils, that is, they had to list differentiating situations ("indicator situations") which are specific in the pedagogues' opinion and have actual distinctive force in connection with educatedness. This is the next step in the process of clarifying the term and we are still within the phase of interpreting the concept. With these questions, the world of pedagogical beliefs, ideas and personal theories is mapped out. Every step or every circle – if we think about it in terms of several embedded circles – adds a new element to the interpretation of the concept and it may help my research go even deeper.

After the "indicator situations", I wanted to get to know the cores of opinion in the teachers' questionnaire, that is, the points they deemed decisive in formulating their opinion about the pupils. I assigned an interpreting role to these; I thought that here they can clarify the interpretation of the situation presented earlier.

Pedagogues make judgements about the educatedness of pupils, mainly on the scales indicating „traditional" educatedness.

Items appear in the pupils' questionnaires as self-assessment scales concerning the characteristics about educatedness and estimates are made about how their parents and teachers see them. In addition, questions relate to the features of substance concerning educatedness and good breeding as well as reasons and methods and the meanings of the concepts are approached by an analysis of metaphors.

In relation to the hypothesis, the study tools also include a socio-metric questionnaire and Oláh's Psychocological Immune Competency questionnaire.

## **Hypotheses:**

I. The criteria differentiated from the answers given to the abstracted and the concrete, site-specific questions differ from one another:

- A) Pedagogues raise more concrete examples for negative situations; there is a kind of generalisation in the case of the positive ones.
- B) More exceptional cases are identified by pedagogues in the case of children seen in a negative light.
- C) The personal involvement of the teacher is very often reflected in the description of the concrete situation.

II. Mostly family reasons are referred to among those for educatedness; the impact of the pedagogues and the school is found relatively much smaller.

III. Groups of pedagogues can be differentiated within the lists of the criteria for educatedness and the descriptions of situations including those using traditional concepts of educatedness and those using the concepts of a mature personality.

- A) The judgements of pedagogues using concepts of a mature personality correlate more strongly with the self-assessments of the pupils than the judgements of those listing traditional criteria of educatedness.
- B) The length of time teachers have spent in this profession has a direct relationship with the type of criteria they provide for educatedness. (In the sub-samples of new teachers, there is a similar proportion of those who take concepts directly from the domain of educatedness and think in terms of a mature personality. Those teaching for more than 30 years use the concepts of mature personality in the first place.)
- C) In the course of factor analysis, we found various factors during the analysis of the judgements of educatedness by pedagogues using different types of criteria.

IV. The strictness of judgements by teachers correlates by scales in the different classes; however, the extent of strictness can be interpreted within the reference framework of the class.



With regard to pupils:

V. Specific features can be identified in the case of children judged differently by pedagogues from the point of educatedness

- A) For example, with regard to sex, criteria of trust and properties or the financial status of the family regarding socio-metric features.
- B) Children judged negatively from the point of view of educatedness in the factors of psychological immune competence score less than those judged as outright positive.
- C) The judgements of educatedness by teachers correlate with the extent of choice given to pupils in socio-metric criteria.
- D) Changes deemed significant by children can be classified mainly into the category of "losses" in the case of children judged negatively.
- E) Pupils' metaphors are related to the teachers' judgements of their educatedness. Pejorative interpretations can be found with high frequency among the metaphors.

### **The results of the review of the hypotheses**

The review of the hypotheses confirmed most of our presumptions ( $p < 0,01$  or  $p < 0,05$ ).

However, the following hypotheses were not confirmed:

III/A The judgements of pedagogues using the concepts of a mature personality correlate more poorly with the self-assessments of pupils than those listing the traditional criteria of educatedness.

III/B) Based on the chi-square test, the period teachers have spent in their profession is not related to what type of educatedness criteria the pedagogues have stated.

V/A Based on the answers by pupils one can say that the economic position of their families is not related to how well-educated their teachers think they are.

V/C The assessment of educatedness is not correlated to how much socio-metric choice they can get. However, there are differences among children cited as priority examples (either in a positive or in a negative sense) according to socio-metric features in accordance with the analysis of variance.

V/D One can make a statement about the hypothesis that as a matter of fact specification of all kinds of change is frequent in the given sub-sample and in fact very frequent about losses (losing friends because of moving, divorce, death, etc.).

V/E In the case of the metaphors, we have identified several pejorative interpretations in the case of the children judged negatively. This category is found in the whole sample, but not very frequently.

### **Further results**

- The items shown with the highest frequency include “respectfulness” (16.6%), “compliance with discipline” (12.7%), “compliance with moral norms” (9.8%) and “reliability” (9.8%). I think, however, that replies given a lot less frequently are just as important, for example, “loyalty”, “compliance with instructions”, “easily motivated” and “intelligence”. They are all elements of a specific set of concepts, which is a unique view of educatedness.
- Pedagogues have indicated several criteria that concern adolescent themes, i.e. the main tasks of personality development (“loyalty”, “secret”, “commitment”, “value order” and “attention”). If you consider this further, their resolution and canalisation may still be taking place. In the course of the analysis of the educatedness studies during adolescence, we will have to face these issues as well.
- Despite express calls to think about concrete situations, pedagogues are not considering specific, individual cases – as if it would be more difficult to recall them.
- Often, a situation is used as a positive indication, while next time the same situation may be used as a negative indication (examples of this can be found among the verbatim evaluations of the same teacher). This means that the teacher interprets the same situation differently when he speaks about a pupil with a positive assessment, and when he speaks about a negative example.
- In 32% of the replies, teachers refer to events to differentiate extreme cases of educatedness which do not appear to be the most blatant events, such as forgetting to bring pupils’ stuff to classes or failing to make homework. It seems as if they have an extremely negative opinion about someone, but fundamentally they find it difficult to identify the reason why.
- Situations affecting the person of the teacher (35.6%) appear mainly in the case of pupils assessed negatively which may unavoidably remind us about the “black pedagogy” of the pupils by analogy (Hunyadyné- M. Nádasi- Serfőző, 2006). As if the

black pedagogy of the teachers would come to the fore, that has made the deepest impact in them in connection with pupils.

- Once pedagogues have already formulated their impressions about the educatedness of the pupils which may have assumed an extreme position concerning assessment, it may have turned into a property of the pupil in the pedagogue's eyes which has become encapsulated and difficult to change. This has become very strongly fixed and involves a distortion of perception, because teachers reported very often (62.9%) that they have not perceived cases or other behaviour in the given pupil than the one that deviated from the "mainstream" of their opinion. This may seem unimaginable since such an occurrence may have been outstanding and memorable because of its unexpectedness and inconsistency with our knowledge to date. If we make less cognitive effort (perhaps because that is what we can do), the advantage of the inconsistent information becomes lost (Fiedler, Bless, 2007, p. 126).

In the case of the criteria, it is typical for those **highlighting the concept of a mature personality** that

- they do not deviate from the other group of pedagogues in terms of viewpoints and aspects of content that define negative differentiating situations,
- however, it is typical for the formulation of the situations that their descriptions are more detailed and contain more personal elements and they are more expressive. In other words, it may well be that the categories are similar, but the linguistic elaboration of the replies is more complex (in the coding: number of words, reference to connections, use of adjectives),
- very often, cases were mentioned which were experienced with children evaluated either positively or negatively which deviates from the event on the basis of which they were classified into the given type (chi-square test,  $p < 0.01$ ).

Based on the above, however, the view of those using the concepts of a mature personality appear to be less coherent from a conceptual point of view, while the drive to get to know the child seems to be stronger.

It is typical for the answers of teachers applying "**classic**" **concepts of educatedness** that

- in the third step, when identifying the cores of their views, classic pedagogic criteria are highlighted. From this aspect, their views are more coherent and they insist on pedagogic concepts more consistently,
- when characterising children given an average assessment, they often act by reporting a kind of duality in that their personality is judged as “thoughtless” and mercurial while their community activities and the roles they play are judged as highly positive.

We have found significant correlations ( $p < 0,01$ ) between the assessments of the same teachers drawn up for two classes which means that the severity of the different assessments of educatedness relative to one another will be the same. Whatever is judged more “severely”, giving it a lower score in one class is judged the same way in another class.

However, teachers work with different assessment criteria in different classes. The Student's t-tests showed significant differences between the averages for the teachers' assessments of educatedness in one class and the other class.

Consequently, different underlying factors can be identified in the teachers' assessment, both in terms of the number and the content of the factors.

Using factor analysis for the assessment of educatedness for the entire teachers' sample, three factors could be identified. The first was given the name of **“Reception and activity”** because based on the factor weights of the variables it is not their specific content but the relationship towards this content that seems to be absolutely essential (which is also included in the formulations, so naming the factor is not arbitrary). The second factor has come to be called **“Cooperation in learning”**. Within this, the desire to study carries the largest factor weight, but it also includes good relationship with the teachers, helping peers, being disciplined and sustained intellectual work. In the case of the behaviour-type variables (e.g. how conventional behaviour is or how much activity is shown in different tasks), I found high factor weights with a negative sign. In the third factor, resolving and processing problems has a higher factor weight and the factor is named **“Problem-solving”**.

After using factor analysis, I came to call the two factors as “Activity” and “Connection” among those applying the classic concepts of educatedness.

Among those applying the concepts of a mature personality, the factors came to be called “Solving tasks” and “Being healthy” (see the Annex) on the basis of the factor weights of the assessment of educatedness.

In the third group, among those using the concepts of educatedness and of a mature personality alike, the underlying factors appear in a more complex manner. Four of them could be identified which I named as “Health”, “Learning”, Problem-solving” and “Work” after the analysis of the factor weights.

- One of the most marked factors among the results of the interviews with teachers is that the pedagogue's own school career has turned out to be decisive in evaluating whether he would report exceptional cases among the children assessed as negative.
- It is another important point of the interviews that the pedagogues report on the advantages of providing this kind of support for self-reflection.

### **Pupils' characteristics**

The analysis of differences in the factors of psychological immune competency (PIC) are highly instructive. (The table of averages and the variance analysis of the averages for the different pupils' groups can be found in the annex.)

Pupils classified into positive groups from the aspect of educatedness achieved higher values for every PIC factor. The variance analysis of all four defined pupils' groups showed significant differences with regard to averages in terms of resource monitoring (.002), resource mobilisation (.000), control of irritability (.001) and a feeling of growth (.001), ability to exercise control (.008), self-respect (.016) and the ability for synchronisation (0.013), so  $p < 0,01$  or  $p < 0,05$ . It is important to see that in addition to the significant differences in the variance analysis of the four groups; in fact there are great differences in every factor in the case of the two “extreme” groups. One can say that the two groups have entirely different PIC features.

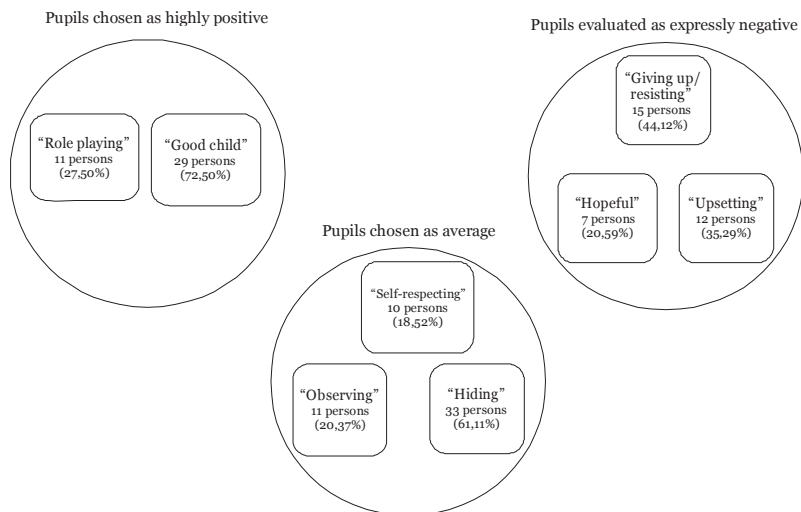
In connection with the former reference to getting to know the pupils and the phenomena of social perception the question arises as of necessity to what extent the teachers' judgements about the pupils' educatedness correlate with the **marks** of the pupils. It was my preliminary hypothesis that there will be some subjects where there will be a connection (I projected significant, strong correlation), but I thought that I will find weak, non-significant relationship on account of most of the subjects.

As opposed to that, high correlation can be found virtually in the case of all subjects (which are in some case astonishingly high). One can say that assessment by the teachers on any scale correlates with the marks ( $p < 0,05$ ).

In connection with the analysis of metaphor, the key concepts of good breeding include "appearance", "good functioning", "duality" and "making an impact" while MODEL stands for the conceptual metaphor.

### Unexpected results found during the processing of data

Smaller groups of pupils can be identified within the various groups. The replies by the members of the groups show a certain pattern.



### Outlook for the future

The lessons to be drawn from the findings include the following:

The cognition-based approach is important in connection with children. Bearing this in mind, we can never look upon the picture of a child as "final" (even if we know how much specificity and sometimes unavoidable rules are involved in the socio-psychological phenomena of the development of the impression and the causes associated with the behaviour). In addition to taking the latter into consideration, we can think about our students – and though them about ourselves – in a more complex and comprehensive manner.

Nowadays it is true in particular that we are forced to cope with new situations increasingly faster. However, preparing ourselves for handling these changes has become increasingly difficult. Children do not always get support and “strength” for this in the family while changes always imply a kind of instability, hence a status that influences behaviour. I think that support for creating equilibrium and perceiving and assessing changes should be part of the educational tasks in schools.

This is supported by the results of the study presented above in that there are connections between the psychological immune competency factors that facilitate coping with difficult situations and the characteristics of educatedness ( $p < 0,05$ ).

The mental hygienic tasks of pedagogues are significant in this matter.

The relationships in connection with educatedness could be presented in an even more complex manner in a follow-up study, asking for reflections upon pedagogic activities by the pupils and the teachers. In the meantime, changes in educatedness should also be studied.

In the next study it would be important to focus upon the development of an impression about educatedness while addressing major events and periods in the pupil-teacher relationship.

It is important to continuously revisit our terminology and analyse how differently or similarly they are interpreted.

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